

Spirit of the Age.

Vol. XIV.

Raleigh, N. C., January 26, 1863.

No. 23

Choice Literature.

FOREST MUSINGS.

Heavy is the gloom that rests as a pall over the length and breadth of "our bright, beleaguered land!" and the groans of her suffering sons and the cries of her anguished daughters seem borne to my ear in every passing breeze. And, hark! there is another mournful sound.—It is a funeral bell. I came to this forest solitude to escape those notes of woe; but they pierce the silence around me with sharp distinctness. Will you sit down beside me, reader, on this couch which Nature offers—the stem of an uprooted tree?—and I will tell you of the young way-farer of life, for whose departure you knell is sounding. Listen! Do you hear that faint, dull beat of the drum? They are bearing the soldier's body for the last time to the house of God, ere the poor relics of mortality are given to their mother earth.

This boy—boy in years, but hero in soul—went forth into the field at the first war-cry. His father's breast heaved, his mother's cheek paled, and his young sister threw her arms around him and wept, when he came, for no holiday sojourn, to the home which his presence had made so joyous, and told them that he must go with his brother to join the patriot hosts that were gathering to do battle "for our altars and our hearths." But father, mother, sister, all said, "Yes, go. God guard thee, our beloved ones! but our country calls—go!" And bravely they stifled the agony of Nature: smiled when their hearts were bursting; with words of cheer, and prayers, and benedictions, bade "God speed" the soldiers on their way; and charged each to watch and defend the other, and not rashly to expose his own life, so precious to the hearts left behind. And boldly and hopefully went the brothers—the young man and the boy—eager to meet the vile invader; ready to bleed and die for their beloved land.

Month after month, with hearts rocked between hope and fear, the parents and sister waited the longed for, yet dreaded tidings of battle and of march. Month after month, and still came the greeting, after each deadly conflict, "A battle—but we are both safe." Blessed assurance! for which they poured forth most passionate thanksgiving. But, at last—it came at last—the message so fearfully, so almost prophetically looked for. It was from the elder brother—"Henry is wounded. I am bringing him home."

With what agony of expectation did they await their coming! In what extremity of soul did they cry unto God for mercy! "Spare him! oh, spare him! at least we may see him once more in life!"

The father went to meet his sons, and the weeping mother and sister tried to beguile the hours and days of sickening suspense that followed, by busying themselves with cares for the comfort of the wounded boy—feeling, the while, how bitterly that these cares might be all in vain. Once, twice, thrice, disappointment! No coming, and no news! It was the fourth day of waiting—but why trace the scene farther! Why paint the two pale and now tearless watchers—the weeping household—sympathizing friends! the faintness of apprehension when, at last, it was whispered: "They are come!" The cold terror that paralyzed the question they dared not ask; the gush of gratitude and tears when a voice exclaimed, "Comfort! he lives!" the revulsion of feeling back to despair, as the low and heavy tread of many feet brought near a litter on which was extended a form they scarce could recognize as the boy who left them! the mighty strength of love by which the mother conquered her heart, and restraining the shriek of anguish it would have uttered, knelt beside her darling, and spoke soft, soothing words to him! the white lips of the father, as he strove to be calm and hopeful! the frenzied grief of the sister, as, turning from the altered face she could not look upon, she clung to her eldest brother, and marked that he too was worn and bagged with suffering! the quivering frame and almost unmanly emotion of the soldier, as but a few hours later he stood beside the couch, and looked in arms, whom duty called him to leave! his brief words of parting to the already riven hearts to which he must give fresh pang—"Another battle expected: I must go!" The weeks of wasting fever—of weary days—racked night—hope charging to patience—patience to resignation—until, with a smile upon his lip, the young soldier yielded to the conqueror Death!

Why picture this, oh reader, to thy, perhaps already lacerated and mourning heart? Why recall what thou hast endured, or show what thou mayest yet suffer in the baptism of blood which

is hallowing the life of our young Confederacy? Is there an eye in all the broad land that has not looked on a like sorrow? Are there many souls which have not been steeped in a like bitterness of woe? And is it kindling, is it wise to dwell on such memories? I answer—it is right! It is—but, hark again! solemn and slow-toned the bell tolls the last march of the boy warrior. In the slumberous stillness of the air, the ear can just catch the distant strains of martial music, and now—the volleys over the grave! and now—silence! His brief, bright day is over! The young patriot martyr sleeps well!

Yes—it is right to dwell on such memories, and there are others yet more dark and harrowing. They steel the heart—they nerve the hand—they sharpen the sword for the combat! Oh, stricken-hearted of the land! let your woes be ever before you! Let not memory or justice slumber, until we have swept from our soil, with the bosom of righteous vengeance, every catfist thing that bears the accursed name of Yankee!

The Private Soldier.

Under this head the Jackson Miss., Crisis pays the following handsome tribute to the private soldier:

"Justice has never been done him.—His virtuous merit and unobtrusive patriotism have never been justly estimated.—We do not speak of the regular soldier who makes the army his trade for twelve dollars per month. We do not include the coward, who skulks, nor the vulgarian, who can perpetrate acts of meanness; nor of the laggard, who must be forced to fight for his home and country. These are not the subjects of our comment. We speak of the great body of citizen soldiery who constitute the provisional army of the Confederacy, and who, at the sound of trumpet and drum, marched out with rifle or musket to fight—to repel their country's invaders or perish on that soil which their fathers bequeathed, with the glorious boon of civil liberty.—These are the gallant men of whom we write, and these have saved the country, these have made a breastwork of their manly bosoms to shield the sacred precincts of altar-place and fireside.

Among these private soldiers are to be found men of culture—men of gentle training—men of intellect—men of social position—men of character at home—men endeared to a domestic circle of refinement and elegance—men of wealth—men who gave tone and character to the society in which they moved, and men who for conscience sake have made a living sacrifice of property, home and comfort, and are ready to add crimson life to the holy offering.

Many of these, if they could have surrendered honor and a sense of independence, could have remained in possession of all these elegances and comforts. But they felt like the Roman, who said, "Put honor in one hand and death in the other, and I will look on both indifferently!"

Without rank, without title, without anticipated distinction, prompted only by the highest and noblest sentiments which can influence our common nature, the private labors, and toils, and marches, and fights; endures hunger, and thirst, and fatigue; through watchings, and weariness, and sleepless nights, and cheerless laborious days, he holds up before him the one glorious prize—"Freedom to my country;" "Independence and my home!" If we can suppose the intervention of less worthy motive, the officer, and not the private, is the man whose merit must commingle such alloy. The officer may become renowned—the private never reckons upon that; the officer may live in history—the private looks to no such record; the officer may attract the public gaze—the private does not look for such recognition; the officer has a salary—the private, only a monthly stipend, the amount of which he has been accustomed to pay to some field laborer on his rich domains. The officer may escape harm in battle by reason of distance—the private must face the storm of death; the officer moves on horseback—the private on foot; the officer carries a sword, the emblem of authority, and does not fight—the private carries his musket, and does all the fighting.

The battle has been fought—the victory won; Lee, or Jackson, or Longstreet, or others, have achieved a glorious success; but that success was attained by the private soldier, at the cost of patriot blood, of shattered bones and torn and mangled muscle and nerves! We do not mean to underestimate the officer, or disparage his courage or his patriotism. We draw the parallel for another purpose, and that is to show, if other than the highest human motive prompts the soldier to action, it is the officer, and not the private, who is most liable to feel its influence.

We have often felt pained and annoyed at the flippant reference to the private,

while the unreasoning speaker seemed to regard the officers as the prime and meritorious agents of all that is done. Why, in those ranks is an amount of intellect which would instruct and astonish a statesman. In those ranks the merit of every officer, and every action, is settled unapealably. In those ranks there is public virtue and capacity enough to construct a government, and administer its civil and military offices. The opinion of these men will guide the historian, and fix the merit of generals and statesmen. The opinion of these men will be, and ought to be, omnipotent with the people and government of the Confederacy.

Heaven bless these brave, heroic men! Our heart warms to them. Our admiration of their devotion and heroism is without limit. Their devotion to principle amounts to moral sublimity. We feel their suffering and share their hopes, and desire to be identified in our day and generation with such a host of spirits, tried and true, who bend the knee to none but God, and render homage only to worth and merit.

FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

An Epitaph.

Remember friends as you pass by,
As you are now so once was I;
As I am now so you must be,
Prepare for death and follow me.

The above epitaph which was found on a handsomely polished tomb-stone in the beautiful Oakdale Cemetery at Wilmington, N. C., was read by a squad of soldiers in the fall of 1861, who were strolling over the grounds, viewing the comparatively few, but magnificent little inclosures, which, from their varied and attracting aspects presented the most striking scenery. This monument was apparently resting over the mouldering remains of a lovely member of some wealthy family; yet under that snowy white marble seemed to calmly sleep a true philanthropist, and meek and lovely christian. The sedateness and consideration with which that admonitive stanza was read, must be left to the imagination of the reader. Each one appeared almost insensibly to take his pencil and diary from his pocket and write the simple, but truthful lines on some particular page. Though this remembrance had not received equivalent embellishment with many others from dextrous sculptor's chisel, yet it very ostensibly attracted the admiration of all who passed by, both soldiers and citizens. After all had read the admonitory inscription over and over again, the squad proceeded back to camp, but instead of the merry conversation and laughter which prevailed as it passed hither, a consideration was evidently depicted on every countenance, and many times during the evening were those lines rehearsed to each other. A participant of that evening's recreation can scarcely refrain from wondering how many of that small squad received the admonition and advice unassumingly offered to all.

OMUS.

Cherry Hill, N. C.

EDITOR SPIRIT OF THE AGE: I am happy to learn, by a constant perusal of your worthy paper, that the din and clamor of war, drive you not from your former stand! God grant that you may meet with success! Temperance surely demands your attention, and ours, for the last issue of your paper contains so much of the doings of intemperance, as to fill me with unfeigned horror. Recently I have seen more of the depths of the hideousness of intemperance in our country, and really I fear the ladies are not all doing their part in this struggle with the monster. Not two months ago, one of Eve's fair daughters persuaded a young gentleman to "taste the delicious wine," after he had tasted, the thirst for wine, that he thought quenched, came upon him with such force he could not resist, and to-night? Ah! to night, he is worshipping at the shrine of Bacchus! "he has taken to drink!" Again; I saw a beautiful girl just blooming into womanhood, standing beside a noble looking gentleman. In her hand she held a goblet of sparkling wine, she had spent all her eloquence in trying to persuade him to "just take one drop" to prove that he was not offended; she would not leave him; I saw he was irritated; at length he drew up his noble figure, fixing his calm penetrating eyes upon her he said: "Woman is the greatest tempter on earth, but even so fair an one as yourself cannot tempt me to risk my future happiness and the salvation of my soul, in a glass of wine. Fair lady I would beseech you to turn your eloquence to a better cause." She turned from him, I know not the effort of her words upon her, but I know that I feel that any girl would find in him a good husband. I fear there are few such. More anon.

ERATO.

January, 1863.

Rocky Mount, N. C., Jan. 19.

MR. EDITOR:—Thinking that a short missive might be of interest to some of your numerous readers, especially to those who have friends in the 56th N. C. T., I take occasion to give them a few items as to our whereabouts, and the condition of our noble and worthy soldiers.

Up to the 4th inst., our regiment spent the last two months at, and in the vicinity of Franklin Depot, Va., the latter part of which time Gen. Roger A. Pryor took command of the various regiments on the Blackwater, which were not regularly brigaded. In consequence of our small force at that point, our guard duty at our posts was very heavy, the men having to stand two days and nights in succession. On the 3rd inst., we received orders to "pack up" ready to move next morning at day light. All were filled with anxiety to know in what direction we would move, and what was to be done. Many predicted that an advance on Suffolk was intended, while others thought only a foraging expedition was to be made. Early next morning (the 4th) our regiment was formed and marched to the Depot; a train was there ready to receive us, baggage and men were soon aboard, and the engines whistle announced that North Carolina was our destination! All hearts seemed to be filled with gladness at the thought of reaching once more our good old native State. We arrived at Rocky Mount, which is forty miles from Weldon, and about the same distance from Goldsboro', at 5 o'clock p. m., pitched our tents, and still remain waiting further orders. Both officers and men seem to be greatly chagrined, that they were not taken at once to meet the vile myrmidons who are accumulating on our coast to devastate the property of innocent and peaceable citizens.

The health of our regiment is excellent, and I am happy to say that it cannot be attributed to the good effect that whiskey is said, by some, to have among soldiers, for they have been unable, for some months past, to procure even enough to wet one end of their whistles.

Since our arrival here, regiments have been coming in almost daily, but probably it would not be prudent to say anything respecting our force at this point; suffice it to say, that within a very few days our strength will be quite sufficient to meet any demonstration that Gen. Foster, or any other General of his creed may see proper to make in this direction. I have every reason to believe, that when an opportunity offers, the 56th will do credit to itself, and the State from which it hails. Although our men have been badly treated by some of the officials in the Quartermaster's Department, I believe they are yet awake to their duty and interest, and are willing to forego all the comforts of home, if they are supplied with the necessary clothing to keep them comfortable while undergoing the hardships of camp life. Some of our companies have not received more than thirty pairs of shoes from the Quartermaster's Department and they have been in service eight months, thus leaving many entirely shoeless. And they have been so for several weeks, spitting the snow and mud on the march; and those who have them have been fortunate enough to get them from home. The fair sex at home, ever full of devotion to our cause, have exhibited extraordinary patriotism in providing for the wants of those in the field. May they never be found recreant to their task while the tyrant's heel is found ready to oppress us.—The same mi, it be said in regard to the pay of the men, but I am not fault-finding, and I forbear at present. It is evident that the fault lies in some one, but in whom I can't say. I humbly hope that our Quartermasters will use a little more energy in procuring the necessary supplies for our troops; it would have a cheering effect on the men, and would make them feel that some interest was taken in their welfare and comfort.

Feeling thankful to God for the many glorious victories that He has given us during the past year, I humbly invoke His blessings on our army in the year 1863, and may it bring forth more glorious results than that which is now reckoned in the calendar of the past.

NILTON,
Co. F, 56th N. C. T.

FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

CASWELL COUNTY, N. C., Jan. 10, 1863.

MR. GORMAN:—There is a state of things existing in this section of country that is too intolerable to bear. I wish something could be done to make it better. I allude to the Speculators and Extortioners. For instance, here are the Cotton Factories: A few weeks ago the Proprietors met in Convention, and then and there resolved and agreed to sell their bunch cotton at \$3.25, \$3.50, and \$3.75, according to the numbers. That was all very well; they supposed that would keep the Legislature off of them; and so it did. Now let us see how it operates: they will not sell a bunch of cotton for money; they say they have a plenty of money and don't want any more; but bring me corn, or wheat, or meat,

or anything to eat, and you can get cotton. Well, some few people have provisions to sell, and they go and get cotton. But the Proprietors soon get in a supply of wheat, and others who have no provisions to spare look out and buy some wheat; but when they go to get cotton, the Factory owners say, "we don't want any more wheat, you must carry your wheat back and bring me some corn or meat, and I will let you have cotton." Well, these Factory men get enough corn, and then you must carry your corn back and bring them meat; they will not take corn.

And some who have nothing to sell, but have money, and have sons, brothers or fathers in the army, and according to the request of our State authorities are trying to help clothe the soldiers, go to get cotton for that purpose. They find the Proprietor reared back in his easy chair with a cigar in his mouth as independent and consequential as money can make him. Tell him your business, and he says you can't get my cotton, sir, for money; money is no object to us; and it is not worth while to argue the case at all; they won't listen to you.

Now, let us see the result of this patriotic convention: Suppose they get grain and meat, they will give one bunch of cotton for one bushel of wheat; and the wheat is ready sale at \$5.00 per bushel, so they get the same old price as before the convention met. And they give two bunches of cotton for one bushel of corn, and corn is ready sale at \$10.00 per barrel. And they will give one bunch of cotton for ten pounds of bacon, and that is ready sale at fifty cents per pound. So you see they are getting the same prices as before.

Mr. Editor, you see the convention and the prices turn out to be a humbug and a cheat. I think they deserve the attention of the Legislature, and I hope they will get it.

Now, sir, can you tell those of us who have nothing to sell, and have no cotton cards, what we are to do under the existing circumstances?

I think if the Yankees have ever done more towards subjugating us than our own people have, I am ignorant of it. J.

Honor to Whom Honor is Due.

Extract from a sermon delivered at Christ Church, Savannah, on Thursday, September 18th, 1862, being Thanksgiving Day, by the Right Rev. Stephen Elliott, Bishop of Georgia:

WOMAN'S HEROISM.

***The attitude of woman is sublime. Bearing all the sacrifices of which I have just spoken, she is moreover called upon to suffer in her affections, to be wounded and smitten where she feels deepest and most tenderly. Man goes to the battle field, but woman sends him there, even though her heart-strings tremble while she gives the farewell kiss and the farewell blessing. Man is supported by the necessity of movement, by the excitement of action, by the hope of honor, by the glory of conquest. Woman remains at home to suffer, to bear the cruel torture of suspense, to tremble when the battle has been fought and the news of the slaughter is flashing over the electric wire, to know that defeat will cover her with dishonor and her little ones with ruin, to learn that the husband she devoted upon, the son whom she cherished in her bosom and upon whom she never let the wind blow too rudely, the brother with whom she sported through all her happy days of childhood, the lover to whom her early vows were pledged, has died upon some distant battle field and lies there a mangled corpse, unknown and uncared for, never to be seen again, even in death! Oh! these fearful lists of the wounded and the dead! How carelessly we pass them over, unless our own loved ones happen to be linked with them in military association, and yet each name in that roll of slaughter carries a fatal pang to some woman's heart—some noble, devoted woman's heart. But she bears it all and bows submissive to the stroke. He died for the cause. He perished for his country. I would not have it otherwise, but I should like to have given the dying boy my blessing, the expiring husband my last kiss of affection, the bleeding lover the comfort of knowing that I knelt beside him."

FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE. TO THE GIFTED RANSOM GUY.

THESE LINES ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
Ah! whether hast thou gone? thou sweetest,
Hast thy warblings ceased 'mid the din of war?
Has Mars with his fiery chariot mangled
Thy noble form? (It must be noble, to
Encase so beautiful a soul) and reeked
its vengeance as if to kill thy soul!
If thou art still traversing this sad earth,
Give to thy thoughts the burning of a passion
That I may list and gaze with ecstasy
Thy talents win for thee true heart-homage,
Such as few can waken in mortal breasts.
Thou art a gem; pour forth thy soul in song,
Twine round my breast thoughts of Heaven,
Or a glorious immortality.
Oh! hark thy destiny! thou must "be great."
The plume of fame awaits thy tread,
And thou canst "go triumphant there." onward!
Though I have never known thee, yet I watch,
With deepest interest to see thee ascend
The great—the glorious ladder of fame.
Had fortune frowned less harshly on me here,
I'd tell thee what ideas thou hast called forth.
Thoughts that have no word-wings to bear them up.
Yes, thoughts that dare not venture north unthought,
Least meeting vile contempt they die too soon!
Then with a brother's eye glance o'er these lines:
Forgive her who pens them. Her fate is hard!
And no sweet hope beams to illumine her sky.
Again I breathe a prayer for thy success!
Adieu! Heaven's blessings ever rest on thee!

Glen Cottage, N. C., Jan. 1863.

ERATO.